At the Doorstep

A Snapshot of New Activity at Cuban Spy Sites

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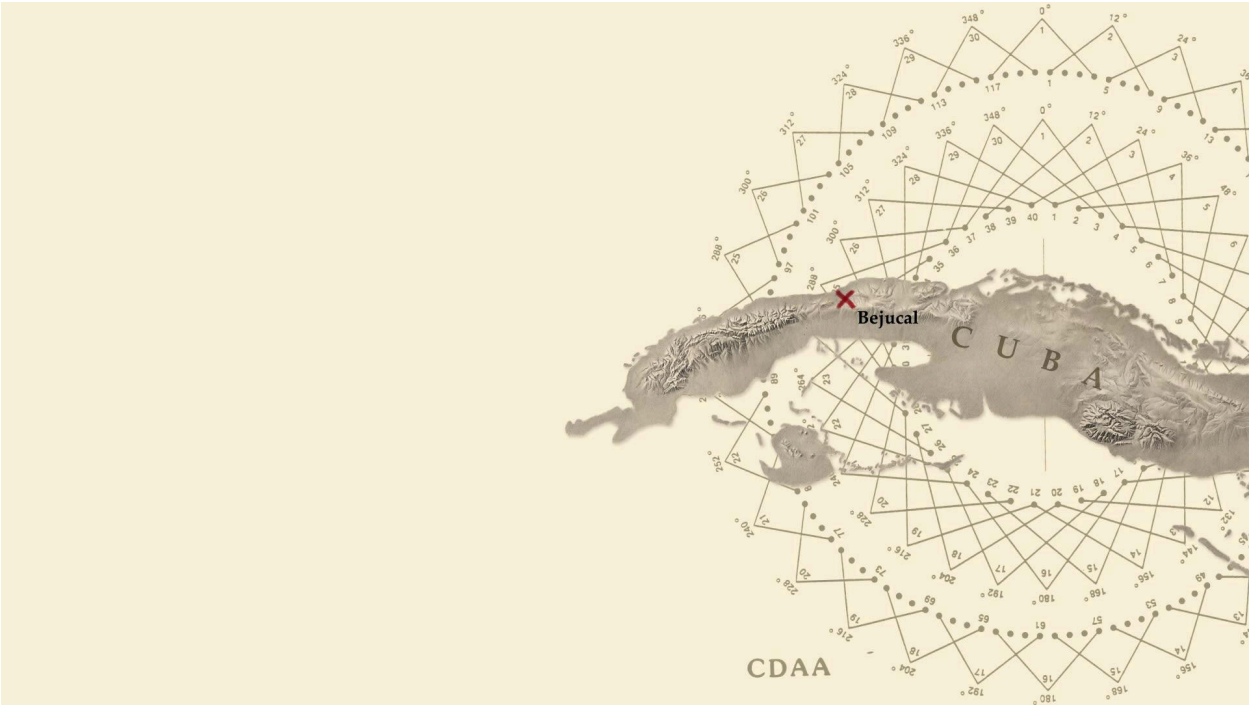


Recent commercial satellite imagery shows new construction underway at a known Cuban signals intelligence (SIGINT) site near Havana, long rumored to have ties to China. The addition of what appears to be a circularly disposed antenna array (CDAA) at Bejucal would expand the site's capabilities to spy on the United States and other countries in the region.

Satellite imagery of another key Cuban site shows a halt in construction, raising new questions about the scope and direction of Cuba's SIGINT efforts—and their possible connection to China.

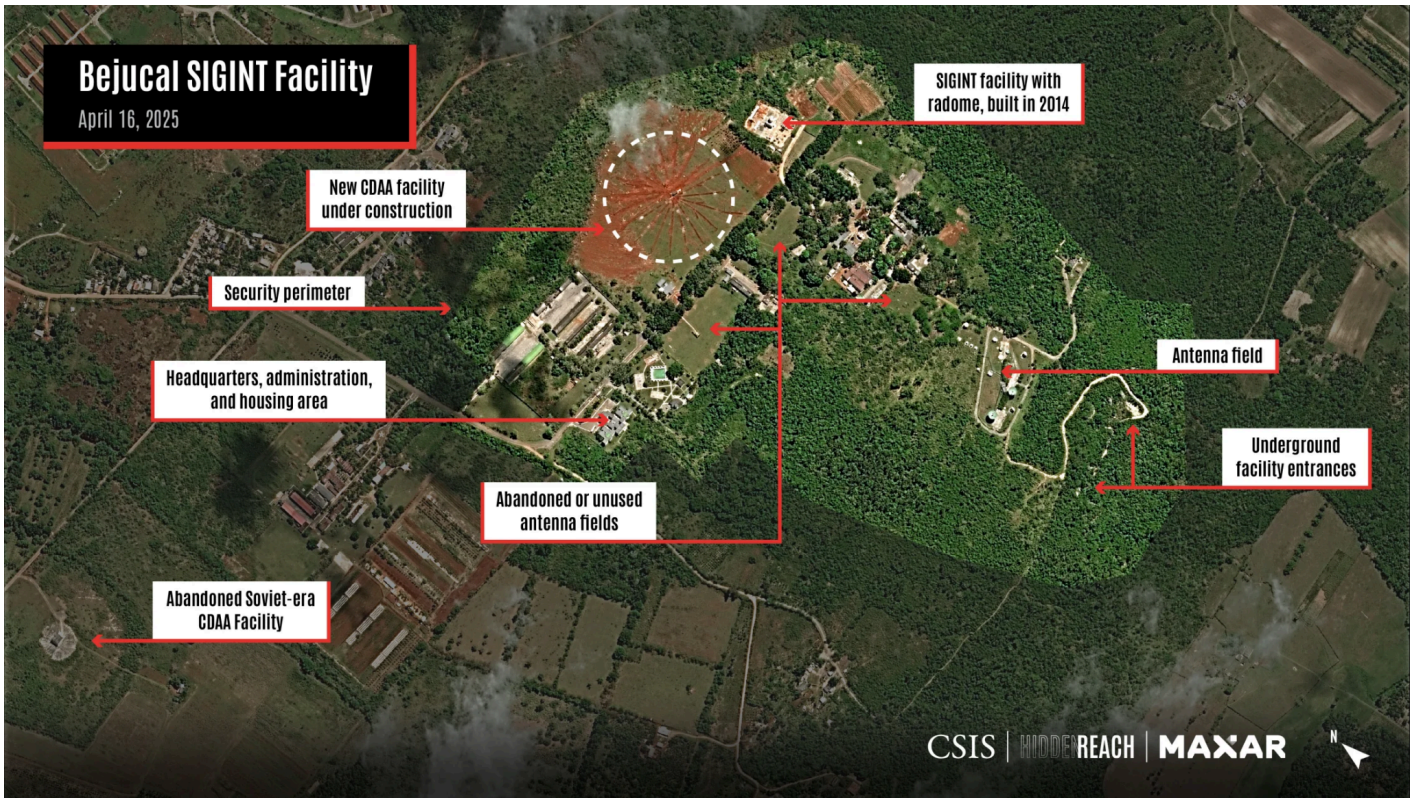
BEJUCAL

22° 56' 54.5"N 82° 21' 46.29"W

Situated outside of the capital, near the town of Bejucal, is Cuba's largest active SIGINT site. The facility has a long history, and is near a site that housed Soviet nuclear weapons during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

Since the end of the Cold War, Bejucal has been widely rumored to be part of China's intelligence-gathering ambitions on the island. U.S. congressional testimony and unclassified government documents have suggested the site has ties to China, and reporting in English and Spanish-language outlets has also linked it to China. During the 2016 U.S. presidential primary debates, then-Senator Marco Rubio called on Havana to "[kick] out this Chinese listening station in Bejucal."

CSIS analysis of satellite imagery from March 2024 showed that the site had undergone major updates over the past decade, indicating an evolving mission set. Multiple antenna fields were visible across the expansive complex, and entrances to underground facilities could also be seen on the southern end of the site. Adding to its capabilities, a new radome was installed within the complex in 2014, which may conceal a radar or other system for conducting electronic surveillance.

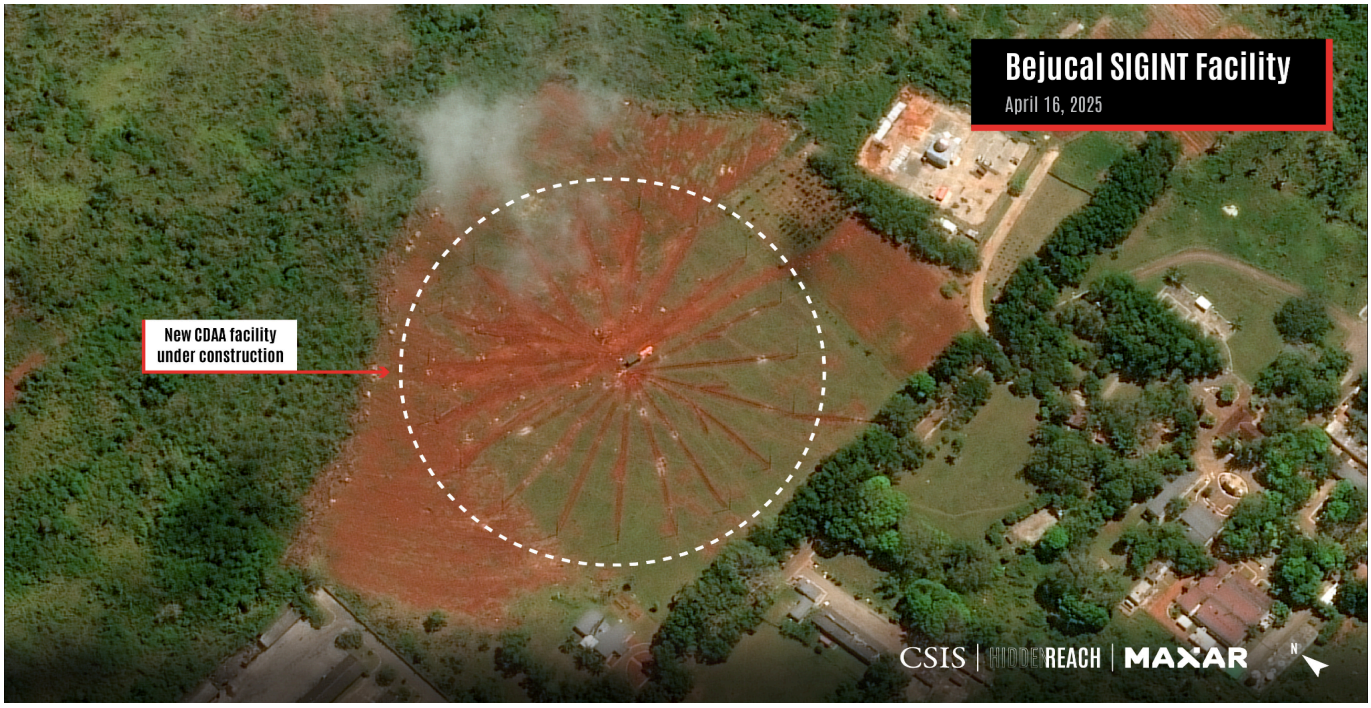


New satellite imagery from April 16, 2025, shows major developments at the site in recent months. At an existing antenna field on the northern side of the complex, the land has been excavated, and six pole antennas have been removed. In their place, work is underway to construct a large CDAA.

CDAAs are used primarily for high-frequency direction finding, which involves pinpointing the origin of incoming radio signals from as far as 3,000 or even 8,000 miles away. A new CDAA at Bejucal could offer a significantly enhanced capability to monitor air and maritime activity in and

around the United States. Interestingly, the Soviets also operated a now-abandoned antenna array just outside of the current complex at Bejucal.

While work at this site is still ongoing, it is already easily identifiable as a CDAA by its circular shape. Satellite imagery shows pole antennas already erected in a circular pattern surrounding a movable trailer at the center. Trenches have been dug for the placement of cables connecting each of the antennas to the center, though the cables themselves are not visible. As work continues, a more permanent structure could be erected at the center to replace the trailer currently there.



This new CDAA will likely replace an older and smaller one that was previously located in a nearby field within the complex. The antennas of that circular array are no longer visible. Notably, the new CDAA is much larger. It comprises 19 antennas arrayed in a circle approximately 175 meters in diameter, whereas the previous array had 16 antennas in a circle spanning 85 meters in diameter, with a trailer in the center. This larger size likely offers greater precision in tracking signals at long distances.

CDAAs were a staple of SIGINT during the Cold War. The United States and Russia previously operated extensive CDAA networks to help military and intelligence services track targets, but new technologies and an evolving mission set have made CDAAs less common for modern day SIGINT.

CDAA at U.S. Naval Base, Pearl Harbor, Naval Radio Station, constructed 1963

Nevertheless, these capabilities remain relevant, even for highly capable forces like the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). China has invested in new CDAA facilities at two of its militarized outposts in the South China Sea, on Mischief Reef and Subi Reef. Paired with other forms of intelligence, CDAAs there can provide China with information about naval and air activity near these contested islands.

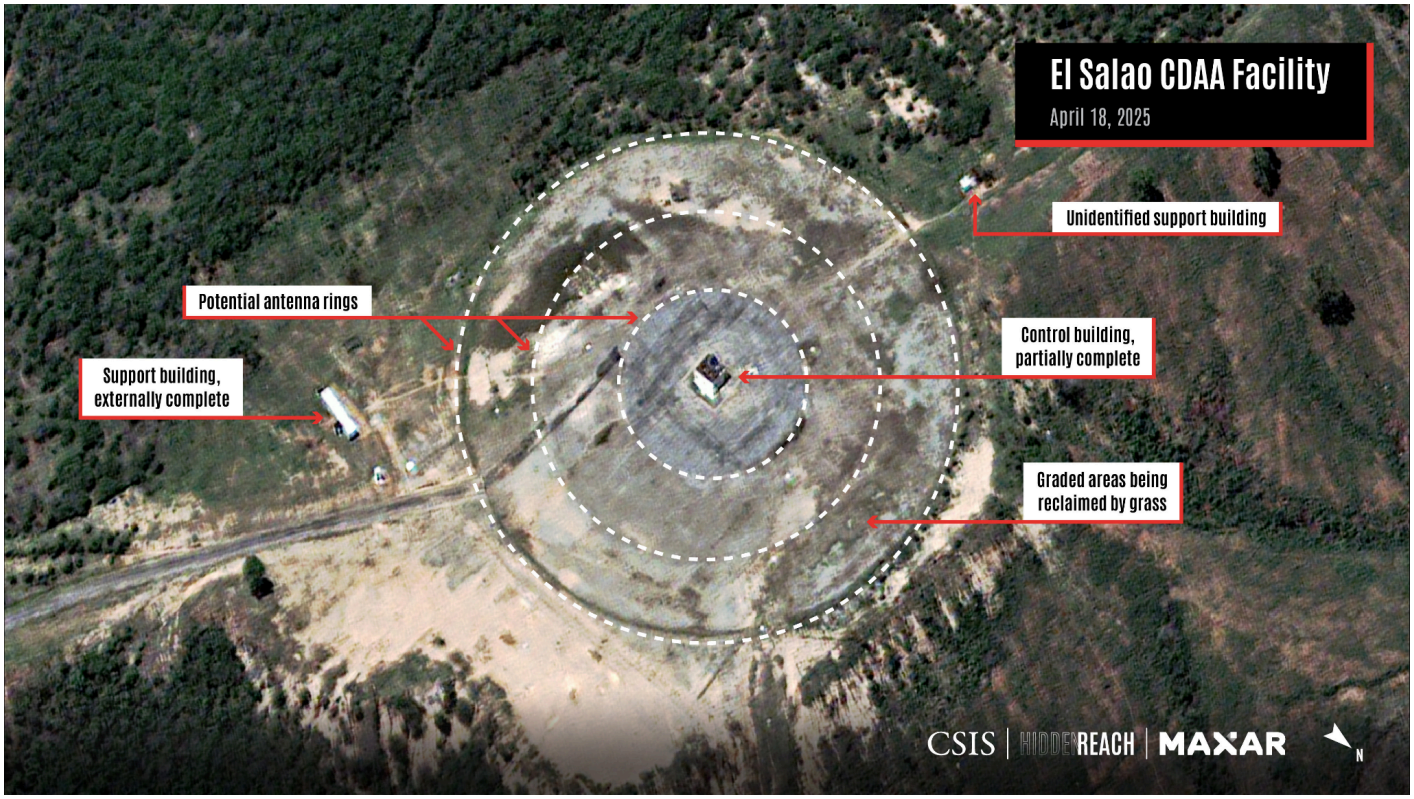
Once completed, the new CDAA site at Bejucal could enable Cuba to collect similar intelligence on U.S. activities in the region—information that would also be valuable if shared with China or other U.S. adversaries.

El Salao

20° 0'19.16"N 75°44'48.49"W

Roughly 500 miles southeast of Bejucal, on the opposite side of Cuba, is another CDAA facility, near El Salao. The site had previously gone unreported until CSIS published satellite imagery of it in 2024. At that time, imagery from March 2024 showed a new CDAA under construction.

However, more recent imagery from April 18, 2025, reveals that work at El Salao has largely ceased. Over the last year, workers continued some minor activities such as erecting roofs on two support buildings, but there has otherwise been little activity observable in available satellite imagery. Notably, the graded area within the CDAA's rings is being reclaimed by grass and other plant life, suggesting a lack of activity and maintenance.



It is unclear why activity at this site has gone quiet in recent months. A CDAA site at El Salao could provide a useful vantage point for monitoring air and maritime traffic over much of the Atlantic Ocean. In particular, it could assist in monitoring U.S. military traffic around U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo, which is approximately 40 miles east of El Salao.

In the unclassified space, there is no smoking gun linking China to any of these sites directly, and China has denied having any links to surveillance sites in Cuba. However, U.S. officials have repeatedly signaled that China has access to spy facilities on the island. These two sites are among those most likely to be supporting Chinese intelligence-gathering operations from the island.

The United States should continue to monitor developments at these facilities. Major changes at Cuban SIGINT sites could indicate an escalation in Cuban—or Chinese—efforts to collect intelligence on the United States.